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A LETTER TO A YOUNG GENTLEMAN OF FORTUNE, JUST ENTERED AT THE UNIVERSITY.

Ut quodammodo ſpeculi vice fungerer et te tibi oſtenderem. Seneca de Clementiâ, I. 1.

OXFORD.

SOLD BY D. PRINCE AND J. COOKE.

M DCC LXXX IV.

A

LETTER, &c.

DEAR ******

IT is with no common apprehenſions that I behold you entered at the Univerſity. In ſuch a ſituation you cannot be ignorant how much you ſtand in need of advice, on account of your youth and inexperience, and ſome other deficiencies, with the mention of which I will not hurt you.

The moment I knew you were really entered and come to reſide, for who could credit ſuch a report? I could not help calling to my recollection the reaſons which were ſeri-

ouſly aſſigned for removing you from my care—that I was too much of a gentleman to conduct your education, and that I had made you too fond of me. Who could recollect that ſuch reaſons had been aſſigned for interrupting, at your time of life, the plan which your guardians had marked out for your education, without feeling greatly for the future fate of him, eſpecially at the Univerſity, concerning whom it had been apprehended that, with ſuch wants, he could be too much attached to his inſtructor, or with ſuch proſpects of wealth, be too much of a gentleman?

In conſequence of feeling for your welfare, I immediately ſate down to write this letter.

Unleſs you are much altered, in the few months ſince we laſt met, you will

will not be diſpleaſed with me for it. When you ſhall be ſeven and twenty inſtead of ſeventeen, you will thank me for it; if you do not thank me now.

The hand in which it is written you will not recollect, becauſe you will only read it in print. And I will tell you plainly why I print it—that you may not be able to deſtroy it, when you have read it; and that it may remain upon record, if you ſhould reject the advice it gives you.

Neither will the letter have any ſignature or addreſs; but you cannot already have forgotten the papers of advice which I uſed to put together for you, almoſt every day, while you were amuſing yourſelf or employed with your maſters. Perhaps you will recollect enough of the ſtyle and manner of them to gueſs at the author of

this letter; which you may conſider as a continuation of them, and as part of the ſecond volume. It is written, I am ſure, with the ſame diſpoſition to be of uſe to you.

Do not fancy that you are reading a moroſe, gloomy ſermon, which forbids you the common, innocent enjoyments of your age. If I ſhall be able to explain what I mean, my letter will little deſerve ſuch a character.

As I am ſomewhat acquainted with the pleaſant iſland upon which you are this moment landed; by having travelled regularly over it formerly, and by having retired to it from choice, and made it my reſidence, at a mature time of life; my only intention is to give you a haſty account of the country and its inhabitants. The fineſt parts of the world are ſometimes

times exceptionable in ſome reſpects of climate or of cuſtom. If you chooſe to caſt your eye now and then over my chart, it may perhaps, however incorrect, point out to you, in two or three ſtrokes, ſomething material, which a reſidence of two or three years, at your time of life, might not have been ſufficient to diſcover.

Before you ſtep on ſhore in this new country, before you ſet a foot in the Univerſity, ſuffer me to guard you againſt thinking about yourſelf as your relations think about a tutor. Be aſſured, if a tutor can poſſibly be too much of a gentleman, it is impoſſible that you can ever be too much of one with your fortune. The Univerſity is at preſent graced by many very ſenſible, elegant and accompliſhed young men, ſome of whom,

through

through my means, honoured you with their acquaintance while you were in my houſe. Depend upon it, if you mean to preſerve their acquaintance, or to get acquainted with any more ſuch, you muſt ſtudy to be a gentleman; and aſſure yourſelf that he is not much worth your acquaintance, who ſhall complain that you are too much of a gentleman.

A gentleman commoner's cap is not alone ſufficient to dub you all you ought to be in this reſpect; nor is that academick moſt of a gentleman who moſt neglects or deſpiſes the rules of the Univerſity to which he chooſes to belong. Believe me, he is far from being really the firſt gentleman, even at Oxford, who goes ſeldomeſt to his tutor's lectures, to hall, and to chapel; who ſleeps oftenеſt out of college; who

who moſt frequently makes ſchemes to Town; who ſpends moſt time at tennis, at billiards or on horſeback, in ſhooting or in going up the water; who ſeldomeſt wears a band, and wears all his cloaths, but particularly his gown, in the moſt ſlovenly manner; who lounges moſt in the High-ſtreet; who is moſt famous for ſtaring ladies out of countenance, eſpecially if they chance to be lions; who is oftenеſt ſeen at the muſic room in liquor, or at leaſt in a red waiſtcoat—in ſhort, who keeps the worſt and the moſt noiſy company in the Univerſity; and who by real gentlemen, by young men of the firſt worth and the leading faſhion out in the world, would not be conſidered as one of them.

At the ſame time, he, who is the direct contrary of all this, muſt not fancy

fancy that he is, upon that account alone, a gentleman. One extreme is frequently as contemptible as the other is certainly culpable. It does not follow that a young man ſhould behave like a methodiſt, becauſe it is not decent to act the part of a madman.

What, then, muſt I be, you aſk perhaps, to be a gentlemanly gownſman?

It is difficult to anſwer you. This letter will not be long enough to contain the anſwer. If I could give you a reciept to make one, in a few ſentences, it would be no mean preſent.

But I certainly am not able. If you really wiſh to be one, you are really one, to a certain degree, already.

Look round you in the univerſity. Obſerve thoſe to whom this character

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is moſt univerſally aſcribed; for they are ſufficiently the objects of obſervation and envy. Do not you, like all who know them, wiſh to reſemble them? The way to reſemble ſuch enviable characters is to make them your imitation and your ſtudy. Avoid, at the ſame time, the manners and modes of life, and ſhun the acquaintance of thoſe who are marked as univerſally for being different characters.

Partake of every pleaſure and every amuſement which become your ſituation, your age and your fortune; but partake of them all like a gentleman. By theſe means, even your irregularities will be called by ſome milder name.

If you really wiſh to be a gentleman, it is in your own power to make

yourſelf one, and you moſt probably will be one; and I ſincerely wiſh you luck. If you do not, I pity you; and, firſt, the Univerſity and, afterwards, the world, will deſpiſe you. Of this I will venture to aſſure you —that it is not in the magic of your velvet cap now, nor of all your fortune hereafter, to make you a gentleman, without a thouſand other requiſites.

With regard to the Univerſity, the fact ſeems to be this. When a boy is turned looſe into college from a private ſchool, or even from a public one, he conſiders the place, to which he is ſent only to finiſh his education, as the world at large; and fancies he is ſufficiently acquainted with men, manners and things, the moment he is completely read in the Coffeehouſes, bil-

billiardtables, foxcovers, hacks, phaetons, and dirty women about the Univerſity.

But a young man can be a very ſhort time at college, without obſerving how very little real worldly knowlege was poſſeſſed by the forwardeſt and noiſieſt boy at the ſchool he has juſt left; and, before he has ſpent an hour in the world, as a man and not as a mere academick, he diſcovers how very contracted the Univerſity circle was, and how very ignorant the moſt knowing of his old companions appear and how much at a loſs they are, when taken out of their own petty circle.

The firſt leſſon which the world, not only male but female, teaches the mere Academical buck, is inſtantly to unlearn all he has been ſtu-

dying to acquire; and the poor fellow wonders, when he uſed to read ſo fluently in his own diminutive book at Tom's or at Wall's, that he ſhould be ſo much at a loſs to read in the ſame book of knowlege, with only a larger character, before the world. The young gentleman does not recollect that he has now turned over quite a new leaf.

A foreigner would know about as much of England, by floating hither in the baſket of an air balloon, and ſpending three or four hours at Benſon, while his balloon was filling again, as a young man knows of the world, by merely belonging, for two or three years, to the Univerſity.

Such a man of the world as this, who had been at the Univerſity ſometime, where his companions looked up

up to him as a leading character, was told by the famous Lord Chesterfield that, in his dress and his manners, he had altogether mistaken the matter. "Good God, my Lord," said the young man, "you dont tell me "so! Why at college, I am quite "the thing, I assure you."—"Then, "take my advice," replied his Lordship. "Marry a University beauty "and settle there; and never cross "Magdalen bridge again."

It is not improbable that this young man was pretty famous in his day for getting into scrapes with the proctors. But such things will now and then happen to the propereſt and most gentlemanly characters. When they do happen, of whatever sort (serious scrapes may surely be avoided with ease), behave in them like a man and like

like a gentleman, not like a ſchool-boy. Treat a proctor at the Univerſity, as you treat at home a relation older than yourſelf; eſpecially as it is much leſs the duty and the buſineſs of an elder brother or an uncle to read you a lecture on your conduct, than of a proctor to puniſh you for offending againſt rules which he is appointed and ſworn to inforce.

Do not take it into your head that you know more of good manners and propriety, becauſe you wear a coloured-coat and a tail, than a proctor ten or twelve years older than you are, becauſe he wears a round head of hair and velvet ſleeves, and who is, perhaps, at the ſame time, confeſſedly, a gentleman and a man of the world.

If,

If, at any time, a proctor ſhould happen not to be quite a perfect character, any more than you are, for after all he is a man; the more good ſenſe and propriety may be ſhown by you in behaving as you ought. Juſt as you may gain more credit in the world hereafter by returning politeneſs for incivility than for good breeding.

The miſchief is that a young man forgets how many rules and forms belong to every ſituation of life; he is not ſatisfied with ceaſing to be a confined ſchool-boy, but chooſes to enjoy more liberty or rather licentiouſneſs than any ſituation will allow; and is totally ignorant that all the profeſſions, the houſes of commons and lords, the court, the world at large, inſiſt upon certain well known ſtatutes or decorums, an offence againſt which

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is immediately puniſhed, not indeed by an impoſition or a ruſtication, but by ſomething worſe, by diſgrace and infamy.

Give me leave to ſay that, at the Univerſity, you will find it much eaſier even to extricate yourſelf from ſcrapes, when you unluckily get into any, by conducting yourſelf like a gentleman; and let me advice you never to behave to a proctor like the ignorant ſchool-boy who ſtudies to be as ſaucy as he can, notwithſtanding he is in the wrong, that his companions, who he hopes are liſtening at the door, may clap him on the back when he comes out from the jobation, for being a fine fellow and bullying the maſter.

Unhappy characters of this kind might make ſure of getting run through the body, when they go into the

the world, for treating a gentleman with a quarter of the incivility and inſult with which they ſtudy to treat the proctors &c of the Univerſity; only that ſuch gentry are generally as deficient in true ſpirit, as in true ſenſe or true politeneſs.

The moſt common offence noticed by the proctors is an impropriety, and ſometimes a ſtudied indecency, of dreſs.

They who are oftenеſt guilty of this offence, whatever they may think, have the leaſt pretenſions to the name of gentlemen. If large buckles are the faſhion, theſe very characters immediately order a pair. If the court puts on mourning, they think colours diſgraceful. If they go to town, if they go abroad, their cloaths, their whole dreſs muſt be like thoſe of other

people, however ridiculous or inconvenient. Yet they will not conform to the common cuſtoms of the Univerſity, not even to the commoneſt cuſtoms of the world while they are in the Univerſity.

In ſhort, they will very patiently ſubmit to be ruled, governed, tyrannized, tortured, in the world, by faſhion; but will bear no one reſtriction of this kind at the Univerſity; though Lord Cheſterfield would aſſure them that an Academick may be guilty of greater immoralities in dreſs, than a man of faſhion even by a ſilk coat at chriſtmas or velvet in the dogdays; and that the particular habit of the Univerſity ſhould at leaſt be worn as decently as the particular habits of the profeſſions, the court, or the world.

In

In the ſhort time you have been at college you already know enough to be ſhocked, if a ſervitor ſhould dare to be ſo irregular, as to put on a gentleman commoner's cap; and never to think of putting a gold taſſel on your own cap. Yet are ſuch things not more appropriated to particular orders in the Univerſity, than other circumſtances in the academical dreſs are to the whole Univerſity?

After all, it only amounts to this. The beſt-bred young man will moſt chearfully conform to all the rules of the ſociety of which he is a member. If he ſhould make it his ſtudy not to conform, a wiſe man will ſuſpect ſomething more than his good breeding.

When the great Lord Chatham was miniſter, he was told that a young gentleman, who was juſt brought into

the houſe, had made a flaming ſpeech againſt his meaſures, and threatened to be a ſore thorn in his ſide. "Oh," ſaid Pitt, "I have aſked about his "hiſtory. He was never famous at "college for any thing but every ſpe-"cies of irregularity, both in man-"ners and in dreſs. Let him go on. "He will ſoon expoſe himſelf and be "taken to by the proctor, depend "upon it."

There are ſome improprieties in academical behaviour of which the proctor cannot eaſily take notice, as there are ſome immoralities in life for which the laws have provided no puniſhment. The moſt vulgar of theſe, that which moſt ſhocks ſtrangers and eſpecially foreigners, is a habit of ſtaring with all the eyes a young man has, at every thing in the ſhape of a woman

woman that happens to walk the ſtreet or to look out of an inn; as if a woman was an animal which he had never ſeen before. This can be deſigned to anſwer no end but one, and even that end it does not anſwer. As a proof of this, I will tell you how ſuch behaviour ſtruck a french woman, of a certain kind, who came to ſee the Univerſity with a foreign nobleman, not long ago. She obſerved that ſhe ſuppoſed he was not neceſſarily the boldeſt general who looked as if he could eat up half an army. "Theſe boys," ſaid ſhe, "have never "yet been men. They do not know "that the chevalier D'Eon, before "ſhe reſumed her petticoats, looked "exactly in this way at every woman "ſhe met, and fooliſhly flattered her-

"ſelf

" ſelf that, by ſo doing, ſhe paſt for " a moſt deſperate man."

This impropriety of behaviour, though not always cognizable at the Univerſity, carries a puniſhment along with it. The young man imperceptibly gets a habit of it, is unable ever to leave it off, and, when he is continually guilty of it in the world without perhaps intending it, if he be not called to account by fathers, huſbands and brothers, he will certainly be abhorred by modeſt women, and be hardly ſuffered even by thoſe wretches for whoſe ſociety he pays.

The laſt ſpecies of improper behaviour at the Univerſity, which I ſhall mention, is puniſhed by the ſimple young man's companions on the ſpot; but, frequently, in a way to leave a mark behind, which is not worn out

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in the longeſt life. A particular name is invented for theſe characters, who always look at a man's gown and his tuft before they make his acquaintance; and who fancy that rank and conſequence can be caught by contact. Ill manners and vulgarity are indeed infectious, and may be almoſt caught thus. But, becauſe I adviſe you not to faſten yourſelf to a gold tuft, as if you were the ſenſeleſs cap to which it belongs, I would by no means have you, with the ignorant pride of ſome, avoid every tuft of this kind, whatever be its wearer's worth; ridicule all who do not act as fooliſhly; and obſtinately attach yourſelf to the very loweſt characters in the univerſity, becauſe you will not, perhaps cannot, aſſociate with the higheſt.

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This is the ſhallow cunning of the fox in the fable, but it does not prove that the grapes are ſour. Perhaps they have ſeldom been leſs ſo than now. The Univerſity has ſeldom perhaps been able to boaſt ſo many young noblemen, whoſe abilities and accompliſhments do them credit, as at preſent. Every one who aſſociates with them, eſpecially when they happen to be ſuch characters, is not to be ridiculed; for, at that rate, where could they find friends or even companions?

He alone deſerves ridicule, and he alone will find it, who aſſumes a rank above noblemen themſelves, and is never ſeen to aſſociate with any one but them (which is not even their own caſe); who takes to his bed, when they go away for the vacation; and would rather, any day, dine with

Duke

Duke Humphrey than with a commoner.

This is deſerving of double ridicule, becauſe ſuch a character has almoſt always the feweſt pretenſions to ſuch ſociety.

In theſe circumſtances, as in ſome others which I have pointed out, and perhaps in all circumſtances, the young man of good manners and good ſenſe, in one word, the gentleman, is the only character who acquits himſelf with credit.

He has occaſion to court no character. He aſſociates indiſcriminately with all who have merit. He is not frightened from a cloth cap by falſe pride, nor from a gold taſſel by falſe ridicule. The gentleman, whatever be his rank, in ſome meaſure creates a new kind of cap for himſelf. He

cannot be a tuft-hunter himſelf, but, in conſequence of his behaviour, his conduct and his appearance, all the reſt of the Univerſity are, I had almoſt ſaid, tuft-hunters of him.

Before I bid adieu to you I will ſay a word about improving your mind and about an amuſement which I taught you.

Cheſs, by my advice, you will always continue to practiſe. If we ſhould meet when you are ſome years older, I will tell you the various reaſons which I have for adviſing you to play at this game, in preference to any game that depends only upon chance. Remember too, that, after having been able to learn cheſs, you muſt not complain of an inability to learn any thing elſe.

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As to the improvement of your mind, that belongs now to others; and I am happy to hear you are ſo fortunate in the reſpectable gentleman who is your college tutor, to whom you cannot pay too much attention. Every proper pleaſure, exerciſe and amuſement may be enjoyed without making a point and a pride of neglecting your tutor, which, you may depend upon it, he will not ſuffer you to do long. But a tutor cannot make all the gentlemen, who are under his care, what they ought to be, by magic. It is not enough that a tutor does his duty by his pupil. The pupil muſt do his duty by himſelf. Without attention and application, we cannot learn even billiards or tennis.

All I ſhall preſume to ſay is, that, as the fineſt laced coat will not hide

perſonal deformity, ſo it is not in the power of the largeſt income to conceal ſome defects of the mind; no fortune can gild over groſs ignorance; and I think I am well enough acquainted with your turn of mind to aſſure you that, if your companions ridicule and deſpiſe you hereafter, you will not be reſpected even by yourſelf.

One ſhort piece of advice I will venture to give you. It only regards the manner in which you ſhould read ſuch books as are recommended to you.

Finiſh every book which you begin to read; and finiſh it, without ſuffering yourſelf to be drawn aſide to any other book whatever.

Follow this advice, and it will be of more ſervice to you than you could comprehend perhaps at preſent, if I had

had room to dwell upon its uſe. But I tell you plainly it is much more difficult to follow this advice ſtrictly than you may imagine.

Some people have made long and oſtentatious catalogues of the books they have read. It may ſeem ſtrange to you, though I fear it muſt be confeſſed, that to the lives of moſt men, even of the wiſeſt and moſt learned, belong no ſhort catalogues of books which they have only begun to read, and from which they have idly permitted themſelves to be allured by ſome book more new to them, and frequently even leſs inſtructing or leſs entertaining. Such little creatures, after all, are the greateſt of us.

But it is infinitely better to read ten books fairly through, from the beginning to the end, without interruption

ruption or diſtraction, than to read ten times as much by dipping into a thouſand different volumes. He travels to more advantage, as I hope you will think hereafter, who conſiders only one country thoroughly; than he who has run poſt over more leagues than the circuit of the world, and has ſeen, like the famous Lord Peterborough, all the poſtilions and princes in chriſtendom. To play twenty ſetts at tennis in a day, is not to play well; but to play all the ſetts, whether few or many, as they ought to be played.

It is now time, ſince we are both perhaps tired, that I fling away my racket and take my leave of you. This I cannot do without every poſſible good wiſh for your future proſperity and happineſs of every ſort and kind.

May

May you grow up an elegant and accompliſhed gentleman! May you turn out a credit to your fortune and your country! May thoſe, who wiſh you well, never feel themſelves aſhamed of you! May you never be aſhamed of yourſelf! May you always bear in mind that the pile of wealth, upon which you will probably be raiſed hereafter above the heads of moſt people, if it do not exhibit you conſpicuous and eminent for what is worthy praiſe, will only ſerve to draw the obſervation of the world and expoſe you, a plainer and more obvious mark, to the pointing finger of ridicule, contempt, and ſcorn! May you avoid a ſituation ſo wretched, for which even riches make but poor amends, by being a good ſon, a good brother, and a worthy, amiable, reſ-

reſpectable, ſenſible character at every period of life! Your's is now life's chearful morning, and I will not overcaſt your riſing ſun, for a moment, by reminding you that, ſooner or later, the brighteſt and moſt ſplendid ſun muſt ſet, and the longeſt and the faireſt day muſt cloſe in and darken. Nor will I bring to your recollection how ſurely the richeſt of us muſt be weighed, hereafter, in the ſame ſcales with the pooreſt of our fellow creatures. When ſuch reflections riſe of themſelves in your mind, and where is the mind in which at times they do not riſe? may they never make you gloomy! This they never do, when all is right within.

Long and merrily may you live, and long and amply may you enjoy all the real gratifications of this life? How-

However long your life may be, you will not ſpeedily meet with advice more diſintereſted than this letter contains. It is the advice of one from whom nothing of the kind is expected; of one who, if you will conſider all circumſtances, can have been at the trouble of giving it with no one view but to render you ſervice.

There are but two other views which I could poſſibly have in this letter—either to recover the care of you, or to attract ſome other pupil in your place.

As to your returning—I truſt I have never given you reaſon to think ſo meanly of me as to imagine it is poſſible for me to take you again, after the reaſons aſſigned for forcing you away.

As to making this letter an advertiſement for a new pupil—you well know

know that, when I took you at firſt upon trial, it was not from neceſſity (thank God!) but out of regard for one of your guardians who had your welfare at heart; and that I kept you, on account of your diſpoſition, and out of regard to yourſelf. Beſides which, I muſt ſay you have given me ſuch a taſte of this kind of ſlavery, with all the goodneſs of your diſpoſition; and I feel how warmly and how totally I devote myſelf to what I undertake; that nothing can ever tempt me to make a ſecond ſacrifice of myſelf in this way.

After my behaviour to you while you were under my care, and after what I have ſaid in this letter, I cannot think it neceſſary to add that I am,

Dear * * * * * *

Your ſincere friend,

OXFORD, 15 May, 1784. —— ——.

POSTSCRIPT.

BY way of poſtſcript, I will copy a curious picture of "a young man," which was painted about 150 years ago by Biſhop Earle, formerly of Chriſtchurch and Merton Colleges in this Univerſity.

"He is now out of nature's protection, though not yet able to guide himſelf; but left looſe to the world and fortune, from which the weakneſs of his childhood preſerved him; and now his ſtrength expoſes him. He is indeed juſt of age to be miſerable, yet in his own conceit firſt begins to be happy; and he is happier in this imagination, and his miſery not felt is leſs. He ſees yet but the outſide of the world and men, and conceives them according to their appearing gliſter, and out of this ignorance believes them. He purſues all vanities for happineſs, and enjoys

them beſt in this fancy. His reaſon ſerves, not to curb but underſtand his appetite, and proſecute the motions thereof with a more eager earneſtneſs. Himſelf is his own temptation, and the world will come hereafter. He is mingled with the vices of the age as the faſhion and cuſtom, with which he longs to be acquainted, and ſins to better his underſtanding. He conceives his youth as the ſeaſon of his luſt, and the hour wherein he ought to be bad; and becauſe he would not loſe his time, ſpends it. He diſtaſtes religion as a ſad thing, and is ſix years elder for a thought of heaven. He ſcorns and fears, and yet hopes for old age, but dares not imagine it with wrinkles. He loves and hates with the ſame inflammation, and when the heat is over is cool alike to friends and enemies. His freindſhip

is

is ſeldom ſo ſtedfaſt, but that luſt, drink or anger may overturn it. He offers you his blood to day in kindneſs, and is ready to take yours to morrow. He does ſeldom any thing which he wiſhes not to do again, and is only wiſe after a misfortune. He ſuffers much for his knowledge, and a great deal of folly it is makes him a wiſe man. He is free from many vices, by being not grown to the performance, and is only more vertuous out of weakneſs. Every action is his danger, and every man his ambuſh. He is a ſhip without pilot or tackling, and only good fortune may ſteer him. If he ſcape this age, he has ſcaped a tempeſt, and may live to be a man.*"

* "The world diſplayed; or ſeveral Eſſays, "conſiſting of the various characters and paſ- "ſions of its principal inhabitants." 12mo 1740. p. 54.

May

May you eſcape this tempeſt, unhurt!

What follows is the beginning and concluſion of another character, drawn by the ſame hand. The reſt of it is obſcured by the change of manners.

" A mere young gentleman of the " Univerſity is one that comes there " to wear a gown, and to ſay here- " after he has been of the Univerſity. " —But he is now gone where he " ſtudies to forget what he learned " before, his acquaintance and the " faſhion."†

May you be ſomething more than a mere young gentleman of the Univerſity, and may you learn ſuch things and make ſuch friends there as you will not afterwards find it neceſſary to forget! Adieu!

† The ſame publication. p. 90, 91.